

Bergman, Pete

Steinem, Gloria

ORIG. INDEPENDENT
Research Service

A GALLERY OF

PEOPLE



The Comic Side of the CIA

In recent months, Firesign Theatre veterans Phil Proctor and Pete Bergman have been touring the country with a club act they fear will "bring the rock press to accuse us of the worst: self-confidence." Yet their inept reputations may be redeemed now that the comics have confessed their cloak-and-dagger pasts. "The CIA sent me on my first trip to Europe," reflects Bergman, who attended a Communist Youth Festival in Finland in 1962. "We were sponsored by the Independent Research Service, and Gloria Steinem was the lady who gave me my ticket." As most of us now know, Steinem then knew the Service was a CIA front. Bergman and his fellow travelers didn't, though he concedes, "I had a feeling something was fishy when the FBI started photographing us at the airport." Partner Proctor got his Commie treat in Vienna. "Every time we tried to talk politics," he remembers, "they'd say, 'We're not here to talk politics, we're here for peace and freedom! Let's sing a song!'" Hence the inspiration for character "Spud" Palmer and his "international hit, 'The Communist Love Song.'" But in a more serious vein (following a backstage order of "coffee and syringe"), Proctor allowed that, despite CIA interference, some kind of "international cooperation" might have been achieved. "The festivals," he feels, "were a great opportunity for people from repressed sexual societies to screw anything or anybody."